

**MARTIN LUTHER KING'S DAY OF SERVICE: LESSONS FOR
UNIVERSITY OF JOS COMMUNITY**

BY

**PROFESSOR SONNI G. TYODEN
BEING MR. VICE CHANCELLOR'S ADDRESS ON MLK DAY
CELEBRATION ORGANISED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF JOS-
AMERICAN CORNER IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PUBLIC
AFFAIRS SECTION OF THE U.S. EMBASSY, ABUJA
DATE: Friday, 25th January, 2008**

**Her Excellency: Robin Renee Sanders, US Ambassador to Nigeria
and her entourage
Distinguished Representatives of Plateau State Government
Distinguished Invited Guests
Principal Officers of the University of Jos
Distinguished Gentlemen of the Press
Distinguished Staff and Students of the University Community
Great Josites**

We are delighted and deeply honored as a community to host the US Ambassador to Nigeria on this special event to celebrate a historical icon in human and civil rights struggle in the person of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Your Excellency, December 2, 2008 will be exactly five years since Ambassador Meece and my predecessor Professor Monday Mangwat inaugurated the University of Jos-American Corner partnership. Since then, the Corner has carried out several activities of bilateral mutual interest to both the US Embassy and the University of Jos. Similarly, we have received support particularly in the area of resource materials Books, Magazines and exchange programmes from the Embassy.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the purpose of our gathering today is to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr., the famous American civil rights activist whose fight against all forms of injustices against humanity in America, have become major perspectives in addressing social ills all over the world. As we join each and everyone here present to celebrate this special day, permit me to share two known important quotes with us

John F Kennedy, ex-U.S. President during his inaugural address January 20, 1961 told his fellow Americans:

- 1 Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country My fellow citizens of the world ask not what America will do for you **But what together we can do for the freedom of man.**
- 2 Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible (*Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations, Article 29, 1948*).

This year's official theme for the MLK celebration is "A Day of Service". Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, the two quotations I have just read challenge us to offer service to our nation, society and our immediate communities. We all represent one community or the other. The importance of the University community as an example, to any society cannot be over-emphasized. What manner of service do we require? Lecturers and students can offer to show case to the public how to maintain a clean environment; or how to approach issues in a

non-violent manner. Medics can offer to provide free health services to those in need. We all here have the opportunity to offer one form of service to our immediate communities. We are sure you don't want to wait until you have a degree or you are given a political appointment. That is the challenge the icon we celebrate his day today brings before us.

This is an event the University of Jos-American Corner marks every year. We would like to challenge the Corner to create ways of helping the University community so that members of the public could greatly benefit from the philosophy of Martin Luther King Jr. We desire to see how our students can cultivate a sense of volunteer service before graduation.

Finally, we thank the Ambassador for choosing to visit personally to be part of this memorable event. Through the understanding of the Public Affairs Section we have enjoyed a tremendous relationship with the Embassy. As an institution, we will continue to seek your support in the areas of intellectual exchange programs; facilities and instructional materials. Similarly, the University will continue to provide the necessary support to the Corner to facilitate some of its programs. We want our Corner to be the best this year in terms of programming.

Remember, in the words of Paul Scott (1920-1978) "Perhaps only those who sacrifice themselves completely are truly memorable".

Your Excellency, Distinguished guests, Great Josites, thank you for listening.